Annual Report ALLEGHENY COUNTY Department of PARKS 1939

Hon. Robert G. Woodside,
Controller, County of Allegheny,
Court House,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Sir:

The annual report of the Department of Parks for the year 1939 is herewith submitted.

The year was fruitful in permanent improvements and the further extension of recreational services of various character. Projects in cooperation with the Works Progress Administration contributed to the present usefulness and beauty of the parks and enhanced future value and development.

Detailed reports of 1939 accomplishments are hereto appended and reference is made to them for specific information.

The use of all facilities again exceeded the previous year, indicating that both North and South Park have truly become "The Peoples' County Clubs" in every sense. Their 4,245 acres of pleasant hills, valleys and woodlands, embellished with miniature lakes and cut by small streams provided means for both active and passive recreation.

In the years since 1926 when the park system became a fact, and particularly in the past four years, numerous physical improvements have been made until now Allegheny County owns a park system second only to our immense national parks.

While some of the earlier work in the parks appears to have been none too carefully planned, the original design and purpose showed expert knowledge and vision. In the secondary stages of development a desire for immediate results seems to account for certain developments which will continue to complicate future planning. This is especially true of the South Park and most especially applies to the Fair Grounds layout and certain roads and location of recreational facilities. In the more recent development effort has been made to preserve the natural beauty of the parks while adding man-made facilities to further increase the usefulness of these two great play spots for those who want active outdoor sports and pastimes.

Annual reports of this department in the past four years have showed a continual and rapid advance in park use. Each year the demand for additional facilities has been twenty to thirty per cent above the previous year. This annual trend is a definite indication that in the future (and particularly should low-cost transportation become available) North and South Parks will come into a usefulness far beyond even the broad vision of those who planned and made them a reality.

Increased and increasing use of the county parks has been responsible for an advancing maintenance cost. Moreover, use of the parks is not confined to the spring, summer and fall season but is year-round. Winter sports, winter picnics, meetings and dances in park lodges, sleigh rides, skiing, skating, horseback riding, horse shows, hiking and even outdoor picnics are ample evidence that use of leisure time by residents of Allegheny County is not dependent on summer sunshine.

In view of year-round usage and rising annual attendance figures, reduction of maintenance costs below the present basic figure is apparently precluded. However it must be borne in mind that park facilities, and especially park services to the public, have been doubled without necessity for an increase even remotely proportionate.

Immediate problems effecting cost and operation of the park system are the depletion of the firewood supply available in the parks and used by picnickers in open-air ovens, vandalism, and increasing use of free park facilities by residents of neighboring counties. Particular objection to the last named is that it results in over-crowding of swimming pools and consequent unsatisfactory conditions for county residents who support the pools and other facilities.

The recreation program for the season 1939-40 has been augmented by free instruction in horseback riding, tennis, swimming, archery, golf, skiing, ice skating, tobogganing, sled and sleigh riding. Growing use of Lake Marshall and the Corrigan Drive swimming pool (which is frozen over) for ice skating has resulted in the installation of floodlights for night sports. Shelters have been provided for skiiers at both parks.

Work completed during the year 1939 in North and South Parks was as follows:

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN NORTH PARK

1. Completion of 24 horse-shoe courts; 14 brick ovens; 15 catch basins; and repair of 150 ovens.

2. Resurfacing of 9 clay tennis courts with 450 cubic yards of clay.

3. Repairing of 20 bunks in children's shelters.

4. Periodic bacteriological analyses of all park waters including the pool, water plant, wells and springs.

5. Penetration of dust on earth roads with 30,000 gallons of road oil.

6. Completion of a new "Starting Line" at the judges' stand over the lagoon.

7. Construction of a caddy house near the new golf club house equipped with modern sanitary conveniences was begun.

8. Cindering 15 miles of park roads during the winter months.

9. Gathering and burning 250 tons of refuse from park groves.

10. Cutting of 1800 cords of firewood gathered from the park forest for picnickers.

11. Surfacing of the administration building parking area and the construction of a concrete reinforced curb.

12. Guyton Hill Improvement—construction of an 18 foot penetrated